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Letter dated 6 December 2007 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I am writing to express my grave concern with regard to the shortage of critical assets required for the successful deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). As explained by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, in his briefing to the Security Council on 27 November 2007, we have not yet received commitments for 24 helicopters (18 transport and 6 light tactical). Without these assets UNAMID will lack critical mobility and re-supply capacity, which would fundamentally jeopardize its ability to carry out its mandate.

Despite repeated appeals to Member States by the Secretariat over the past months and my personal intervention with a considerable number of leaders, including on the margins of the meeting held in Annapolis, no Member State has come forward to provide these vital assets.

We have considered other options, including the possibility of outsourcing the transport helicopters to civilian contractors and determined that, given the non-permissive security environment in Darfur, a civilian contractor would not be able to transport troops who would be required to respond to emergency security situations.

As an eleventh-hour effort I am sending a high-level team to the forthcoming European Union-Africa Summit in Lisbon to directly engage with as many key leaders as possible on this subject. The team will also hold discussions with Sudanese officials in an effort to resolve the issue of UNAMID troop composition.

I write at this critical moment because of my faith in the collective commitment of the Security Council to see its mandated operation succeed. With only three weeks left before the transfer of authority from the African Union Mission in Sudan to UNAMID, the situation has become acute. While helicopters alone cannot ensure the success of the mission, their absence may well doom it to failure. I hope that Council members will be able to exercise their influence so as to transform international concern for the situation in Darfur into the tangible provision of the 24 helicopters, which could make such a critical difference to the people of Darfur.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Ban** Ki-moon

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